

Options for Northgate Single Family Rezone Policy

June 30, 2004

On March 24, 2004, the City Council adopted Resolution 30662, which identifies what amendments will be given further consideration during the 2004 update of the Comprehensive Plan. One of the amendments they identified was incorporating the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan (NACP) goals and policies into the Comprehensive Plan. Another amendment they identified for consideration related to a proposed rezone in the Northgate plan area.

In 2003, a private developer, Howland Homes, proposed a rezone from single family to Lowrise 1 multifamily zoning for the block face on the north side of North 113th Street between Meridian and Corliss Avenues. The Land Use Code lists many factors to be considered when an upzone of single family zoning is proposed. In general, these factors are weighed and balanced in order to reach a decision. However, one of the criteria says that if an area is designated as single family in a neighborhood plan, it should remain single family. This criterion has the effect of an “on-off switch”, in that if it is met, a proposed upzone is denied, regardless of the other factors being reviewed. The Howland Homes rezone proposal was denied mainly on this basis.

Option 1: Howland Homes then proposed the following amendment to the proposed Northgate section of the Comprehensive Plan that would address this criterion and permit consideration of the rezone:

Rezoning of land on the north side of North 113th St. between Meridian and Corliss Avenues, from a single-family designation to a Lowrise 1 (L-1) designation may be considered.

Option 2: Barbara Maxwell, a member of the Northgate Stakeholders Group, proposed an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan which was intended to preserve single family zoning in the Northgate Area and prevent the Howland Homes rezone and other potential upzones. Her proposal is:

Mapped single family zoned areas are designated as appropriate for single family use.

Option 3: The Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee discussed this issue at their meeting on June 15, 2004. It did not support the Howland Homes proposal, and agreed with the direction of Barbara Maxwell’s proposed language. Barbara was out of town and unable to attend the June 15th meeting, but had left a message that the goal of maintaining single family zoning was more important to her than the exact wording of the policy. The Subcommittee supported the following policy:

Maintain the character and integrity of the existing single-family zoned areas by maintaining current single family zoning.

Option 4: At the Stakeholders Group meeting on June 24, there was not agreement about this proposed policy, and the group agreed to continue the discussion at the next meeting. Some Group members favored a more flexible policy that would not lead to denial of single family rezones in every case. John Lombard suggested amending the policy proposed by the Subcommittee as follows:

Maintain the character and integrity of the existing single-family zoned areas.

Option 5: Option 1 is site-specific and does not provide guidance for single family rezones throughout Northgate. Options 2-4, by referring to single family *zoning*, continue the less flexible policy and would lead to denial of upzones regardless of other factors. Another possible option which provides general direction but does not specifically mention single family zoning is to adopt the language from NACP Implementation Guideline 4.1, which states:

Maintain and protect single family neighborhoods.